

## Report of the UNESCO Open Forum: Multi-stakeholder Consultation on UNESCO's Comprehensive Study on the Internet at Istanbul IGF 2014

### Summary of discussion:

The session was hosted by UNESCO and attended by 30 participants and 11 speakers.

UNESCO Deputy Director General Mr Getachew Engida kicked off the session by informing that the Forum aims to share the initial findings and seek inputs through an inclusive multi-stakeholder consultation process on its ongoing Comprehensive Study of Internet-related issues as mandated by its 37<sup>th</sup> General Conference Resolution 52 (2013). The discussion focused in the four fields of the Study (i) **Access** to information and knowledge, (ii) **Freedom of expression**, (iii) **Privacy**, and (iv) **Ethical dimensions of the information society** and possible options for future actions for UNESCO and its member states.

Mr Engida also released that UNESCO is organizing an international multistakeholder conference to discuss the first draft of UNESCO's consultative Internet Study, at UNESCO headquarter in Paris, 3-4 March 2014.

Mr Guy Berger (Director for Freedom of Expression and Media Development, UNESCO) and Mr Indrajit Banerjee (Director for Knowledge Society, UNESCO) presented the concept note and questionnaire of Internet Study and the background framework for the study "[Internet Universality](#)", which summarizes UNESCO's positions on the Internet and highlights four R-O-A-M principles: (i) that the Internet should be Human **Rights-based** (ii) "**Open**", (iii) "**Accessible to All**", and (iv) nurtured by **Multi-stakeholder Participation**.

The discussion were structured in the five key questions of the study on (i) Access to information and knowledge, (ii) Freedom of expression, (iii) Privacy, and (iv) Ethical dimensions of the information society and (v) possible options for future actions texts. The key points raised in each area are as follows:

- Access:

Mr Pedro Less Andrade from Google suggested that as a cross-sectional issue between access, freedom of expression and privacy, the "right to be forgotten" and limitation of liability of Internet intermediaries are challenging the balance of free expression and privacy. It is important not to mix information and personal data which should be under different legal institutions. Companies receive requests to remove content without having a judicial order and there is lack of due process and legislation to address this. A good exercise would be to implement the principles of joint declaration on freedom of expression and Internet signed by Special Rapporteurs from the Americas, Europe and Africa.

Ms Avri Doria stressed the issue of inclusion to foster participation of women and girls, people with disability and other groups marginalized for their sexuality. This should be ameliorated by

not only stopping legislation against various populations and passing enabling legislation, but also educational programs and media campaigns to change mind-sets.

Mr Nigel Hickson from ICANN suggested that preserving net neutrality is crucial for access to online information. He stated that a unified, interoperable, universal and open domain name system, rather than a fragmented one along national legislations, is indispensable for universal access to information on Internet.

Participants raised there is a lack of good open source textbooks for students in developing countries and the need of people with disabilities should be considered in any level of Internet development. Participants shared good practice of Sweden having established digital infrastructure for an educational library.

- Freedom of expression:

Ms Silvia Grundmann viewed Internet as a fundamental for freedom of expression and shared the Council of Europe's work by CDMSI (the committee on media and information society) to promote right to access. She also addressed the challenge of online hate speech, and suggested UNESCO explore further, including the link between hate speech in general speaking and hate crime.

She also emphasized safety of journalists as an important challenge to online freedom of expression and praised UNESCO's new study on digital safety. A broader perspective of digital safety should be taken to include diverse media actors besides journalists.

Other challenges raised touched defamation laws, licensing of online services, surveillance, data retention and cloud computing.

- Privacy:

Ms Ceren Unal said that a right to be anonymous is crucial to ensure people speaking up their minds. She observed a struggle between governments and users on privacy violations by surveillance and filtering. She also mentioned the challenges posed by intermediaries' liability and big data. She proposed that Internet Universality should consider the Internet of Things.

Ms Lillian Nalwoga pointed out that media and information literacy can be developed to protect privacy and personal data by raising people and youth awareness on their privacy and safety online. Media organizations need to build capacity to protect individuals and reinforce their privacy. She also highlighted digital literacy skills as a global challenge that all users need knowledge and skills to address new challenges, including policy makers.

- Ethics

Ms Marianne Franklin suggested a need for users and youth to use Internet more diversely as a platform not only for chatting but discussing political and sensitive issues. This requires a better understanding of the Internet based on multi-disciplinary and multi-actor studies.

Ms Ceren Unal Ceren said ethical concern of journalists and ethics in online environment, should be an important component of UNESCO's Internet study, and it was cross-cutting with other areas in free expression and privacy.

- Broader issues and options:

Ms Franklin presented the outcome of the Internet Rights and Principles Charter which addresses surveillance, hate speech, and calls for global campaign on promoting digital rights. Mr Hickson suggested that UNESCO should play a pivotal role to discuss these broader policy issues beyond technical aspects which were already addressed by many platforms such as IETF, W3C, etc.

Participants shared the experience of Yemen IG conference, and suggested that free expression and privacy can be fostered through working in a bottom-up manner.

Speakers said the Internet Study questionnaire was too long to fill online. Mr Berger clarified it is not an opinion poll but a qualitative enquiry for related ideas and research, and submitters should only answer the questions where they could add real value.

### **Conclusion:**

UNESCO Internet study was acknowledged as a broad and pertinent study feeding to the current debates of Internet ecosystem. Participants are encouraged to get engaged and provide written contributions to UNESCO questionnaire. The first draft of the study will be delivered and present at UNESCO conference in Paris 3-4 March 2015.

Report by: Xianhong Hu and Guy Berger

All these documents are available at: [www.unesco.org/new/internetstudy](http://www.unesco.org/new/internetstudy)  
All feedbacks on the study could be addressed to [Internetstudy@unesco.org](mailto:Internetstudy@unesco.org).